



US SENATE

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United States Senate

**Deliberating upon the oversight of the United States Intelligence
Community, with a view to strengthening congressional oversight
and accountability**

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THIS DOCUMENT IS ONLY FOR REFERENCE. ANY DIRECTIONS IN WHICH DEBATE MAY BE TAKEN, AND ANY POINTS OFFERED IN FAVOUR OF EITHER SIDE, ARE ONLY A FEW AMONG THE MANY THAT MAY BE RAISED AND DEBATED UPON IN COMMITTEE.

1. Letter from the Executive Board

Dear Senators,

Welcome from the Executive Board to our simulation of the United States Senate. We hope, whether this is your first conference or you are an old hand at it, that you will enjoy debating a topic that the United States Senate has been debating for fifty years without resolving - who should watch the watchers?

It is important to remember that the issue that you will be dealing with is not simply an academic one. As you read this, there is a major surveillance statute that has expired while Congress remains deadlocked over its renewal, an oversight board that does not have its quorum while court hearings are underway about whether its members can be said to be removed in accordance with the law, and the Senate Intelligence Committee has requested documents from the executive branch, which has failed to give them up.

This Background Guide is meant merely to provide some context about the agenda and the expectations from the members within the committee. It explains the mandate of the Senate, the structure of intelligence oversight, its origins, the points of the current debate, as well as the important dates, statutes, and numbers which should provide an appropriate basis for research. This is merely a starting point. Use it to find out what needs to be examined in more detail and then study the topic from as many sources as possible, starting with the documents presented in the last part. Being well-informed will help you hold your own in committee and earn the respect of your peers. This guide cannot be used as evidence when you are debating formally.

What the Executive Board expects from you is not volume or aggressiveness, but thoroughness, consistency with the politics of your state and your party, capability of making deals with the opposition, and most importantly, proposals. Remember that

the Senate is a legislative body, and a speech that ends with policy proposal is more valuable than a speech that ends with applause.

However much you may want to win, I hope you will treat all your fellow senators with respect. We, of course, always appreciate your input and feedbacks, and the executive board shall try our best to make your stay here a pleasant one. If there is anything you would like to ask prior to the conference, feel free to contact us anytime.

With warm regards and high expectations,

The Executive Board

United States Senate

2. MUN Rules Of Procedure (ROP)

1. Roll Call

- The Chair calls on each country to declare if they are "Present" or "Present and Voting." It refers to the voting procedure on the Draft Resolution, where a delegate can vote "Yes", "No", or opt to "Abstain".
- If "Present and Voting," the delegate cannot abstain from voting. If the delegate chooses to respond with "Present", they may answer with "Present and Voting" on subsequent days, but this is not permissible for "Present and Voting" as this reply must be used consistently from that point forth.

2. Setting the Agenda

- Delegates motion to set the agenda, followed by a formal debate on which topic to discuss first. This motion requires a simple majority to pass.

3. Speakers' List

- After passing a motion to enter formal debate, delegates are placed on a speakers' list to make formal speeches. Time limits are set, and the Chair calls on delegates to speak in order.
- A delegate must raise their placard if they wish to add their name to this list. They can be on this list only once on any occasion.

4. Points

- **Point of Order:** To correct a procedural error by the Chair.
- **Point of Personal Privilege:** For personal discomfort (e.g., if the room is too cold, or if a fellow delegate cannot be heard).
- **Point of Inquiry:** To ask questions about discussion or statements in committee.
- **Point of Parliamentary Inquiry:** To ask questions with regard to the Rules of Procedure.

5. Motions

- **Motion to Suspend the Meeting:** To break for caucuses or adjourn the session.
- **Motion to Close Debate:** Ends the discussion on a topic and moves to voting. Requires a two-thirds majority.
- **Motion to Table the Topic:** Postpones debate on a topic. Requires a majority vote.

6. Yields

- **Yield to the Executive Board:** A delegate yields their remaining time from their speech to the Executive Board. It is to be used as they see fit.
- **Yield to Another Delegate:** A delegate yields their remaining time for another delegate to speak. (This delegate's permission must be sought beforehand)
- **Yield to Points of Information:** A delegate yields their remaining time to Points of Information to the committee.
- **Yield to Comments:** A delegate yields their remaining time to comments from the committee.

7. Caucuses

- **Moderated Caucus:** The Chair controls the speaking order with shorter, focused speeches. The topic selected is a narrowed version of the agenda, chosen by the delegate who proposed the moderated caucus.

- **Unmoderated Caucus:** Informal discussion among delegates not under the moderation of the Executive Board.

8. Draft Resolutions and Amendments

- Delegates collaborate to create draft resolutions, which are formal solutions to the discussed issue.
- **Friendly Amendments:** Accepted by all sponsors without a vote.
- **Unfriendly Amendments:** Need to be voted on to be added.

9. Voting

- **Procedural Votes:** Includes motions and amendments; all members must vote.
- **Substantive Votes:** For resolutions and unfriendly amendments; only "Present and Voting" delegates may vote, and abstentions are allowed.

3. The Committee: Understanding the United States Senate

This is not an organization run by the United Nations, and it is not something to be run like it. You will act as Senators from the United States — political figures who represent a state, a party, and a group of constituents — within a room where real legislation is made. In order to make yourself believable as this, you must know how the real Senate operates. This passage is intended as an operating guide to the real organization.

3.1 What the Senate is

The Senate is the upper house of the Congress of the United States, created under Article I of the U.S. Constitution. It comprises 100 senators who are chosen to serve in six-year periods and are two from each of the 50 states, irrespective of their population. The elections are staggered so that about one-third of the members are elected every second year to ensure that there is a continuity of membership in the Senate, unlike the case in the House of Representatives. To be eligible for the office, one has to be at least thirty years of age, a citizen for nine years, and a resident of the state in which he or she is elected. The Senate is presided over by the Vice-President of the United States, but he can only vote to break a tie.

The Senate was intended to serve as the ‘cooling saucer’ of American politics, which means that it was supposed to be smaller, slower, and deliberative than the House. Some of the powers of the Senate are exclusive, and they are directly related to its role: the Senate has the exclusive power to confirm nominations for high-level executive and judicial positions through simple majority vote (‘advice and consent’), the Senate is empowered to approve treaties through two-thirds vote, and the Senate acts as the trial body when dealing with impeachments. Every head of the CIA, FBI, NSA, and DNI has to go through Senate confirmation.

3.2 How the Senate actually works

The actual work of the Senate takes place in its committees rather than on its floor. The Senate consists of sixteen permanent committees, including Armed Services, Judiciary, Appropriations and Foreign Relations, as well as select and special committees set up for certain tasks. Committees hear testimonies, take evidence, investigate matters, mark up legislation, i.e. amend it line by line, and report legislation to the full Senate. A bill which cannot survive committee stage will never reach the floor at all.

On the floor, the Senate lives on two main things: unanimous consent and time. Having the right to debate on almost any subject endlessly, the Senate conducts business under unanimous consent agreements between the party leaders. In case of disagreements, a minority can use a filibuster, which is an endless debate, while invoking cloture (Rule XXII) needs sixty votes to end discussion on most bills. That is why sixty, rather than fifty-one, becomes the key number for controversial bills, and why intelligence reform legislation has failed or passed depending on the ability of senators to form cross-partisan coalitions. As for nominations, they need only a simple majority.

Moreover, the Senate makes laws along with the House; it needs that the same bill should pass from both houses of Congress and then should be approved by the President of the country, or else the veto of the bill should be overridden by two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress for its passage into law. The Senate can take initiative, but cannot work alone — as 2026 showed, when the two houses passed different surveillance bills and the statute lapsed in the gap between them.

3.3 The Senate's oversight toolkit

'Congressional oversight', therefore, is not a single power but a collection of many powers, most of which are implied rather than written into the Constitution. In the case of *McGrain v. Daugherty* (1927), the U.S. Supreme Court declared that the power of investigation and the power to compel testimony were incidental to the legislative power of Congress. The Senate's means of overseeing intelligence agencies are, in fact:

- Hearings and briefings, both public and private, where executive officials testify under oath;
- Subpoena power for obtaining documents and testimony, backed up by contempt of Congress proceedings;
- Control of the purse: no intelligence agency may spend money that has not been authorized and appropriated by Congress, making the budget cycle the strongest tool of oversight;
- Confirmation power: each senator has the ability to 'hold' nominations, and committees have the ability to slow down or stop nominations in order to get information or concessions;
- Statutory requirements for reporting written into law that agencies must give information about their activities to the committees; support agencies such as the GAO and CRS, which audit and analyze on Congress's behalf; and legislation itself, the ultimate remedy for an oversight failure.

3.4 The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI)

Since the focus of this agenda is intelligence oversight, the delegates must be well versed with the committee that is central to it. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence was set up in Senate Resolution 400 of 19 May 1976, right after the Church Committee hearings, 'to oversee and make continuing studies of the intelligence activities and programs of the United States Government' to make sure that they comply with the constitution and the law. Its parallel body in the House, the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI), came into existence in 1977.

The SSCI has fifteen members, out of which eight belong to the majority party. For the Senate, it is quite unusual since the minority leader of this committee is called the 'Vice Chairman,' not the 'Ranking Member' – an obvious message going back to

the time of the establishment of the committee itself, that intelligence oversight has to be a bipartisan endeavor. There is a rotating membership in order to prevent capture of intelligence oversight by certain senators. At present, in the 119th Congress, Tom Cotton of Arkansas is the Chairman and Mark Warner of Virginia is the Vice Chairman.

The Intelligence Authorization Act (IAA) is the piece of legislation produced by the committee each year after examining the President's budget submission for the intelligence community. It is the mechanism by which funding, authority and control are exercised over the intelligence community through legislation. The committee's jurisdiction includes the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, CIA, National Intelligence Program, and shares jurisdiction over defense intelligence with the Armed Services Committee and the FBI national security operations with the Judiciary Committee. The patchwork of jurisdictions — twelve committees with overlapping jurisdictions over the IC, from Appropriations to Homeland Security — is another structural issue highlighted by the 9/11 Commission, one that your committee might wish to correct.

3.5 Your mandate in this simulation

For the purposes of this conference, the committee convenes as a special deliberation of the United States Senate on the agenda: 'Deliberating upon the oversight of the United States Intelligence Community, with a view to strengthening congressional oversight and accountability.' You are empowered to do what the Senate does: debate, investigate through questioning, and — most importantly — draft, amend, and pass legislative text (bills and resolutions). Your foreign policy, so to speak, is your senator's politics: your state's interests, your party's platform, and your own legislative record. A senator from a defense-heavy state may see this agenda very differently from a senator whose politics were built on civil liberties, and those differences frequently cut across party lines. The Executive Board will expect your positions to be recognizably grounded in that reality, while leaving you genuine room to negotiate.

4. Key Terms and Concepts

The intelligence oversight debate has a vocabulary of its own. The following terms will appear constantly in committee and in your research:

Intelligence Community (IC): The federation of 18 U.S. government organizations that conduct intelligence activities, coordinated since 2005 by the Director of National Intelligence. It includes two independent agencies (ODNI and CIA); nine Department of Defense elements (NSA, DIA, NGA, NRO, and the intelligence components of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Space Force); and seven elements of other departments, including the FBI's national-security branch, DHS's Office of Intelligence and Analysis, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and intelligence offices at Treasury, Energy, the DEA, and the Coast Guard.

National Intelligence Program (NIP) and Military Intelligence Program (MIP): The two budget streams that fund the IC. Only aggregate figures are disclosed publicly; in recent fiscal years the combined total has been on the order of USD 100 billion annually.

Covert action: An activity of the U.S. government meant to influence conditions abroad where the U.S. role is not intended to be apparent or acknowledged — defined and regulated by Section 503 of the National Security Act (50 U.S.C. § 3093). It requires a written presidential 'finding' and notification to the intelligence committees.

Gang of Eight: The statutory shorthand for the eight congressional leaders — the House Speaker and Minority Leader, the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders, and the chairs and ranking members of the two intelligence committees — to whom the President may limit notification of the most sensitive covert actions in extraordinary circumstances.

FISA and the FISC: The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978 governs electronic surveillance for foreign-intelligence purposes inside the United States, and created the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court, a panel of federal judges that authorizes such surveillance in classified proceedings.

Section 702: The provision, added to FISA in 2008, that permits warrantless collection of the communications of non-U.S. persons located abroad from U.S. communications providers. Because Americans communicate with foreigners, their messages are 'incidentally' collected in large volumes — the crux of the modern reform debate.

U.S. person query / 'backdoor search': Searching an existing database of Section 702 collection using an American's name, email, or phone number — accessing an

American's communications without a warrant, which critics call a backdoor around the Fourth Amendment and agencies defend as reviewing lawfully collected data.

Inspector General (IG): A statutorily independent internal watchdog within an agency, empowered to audit and investigate. The IC has both agency-level IGs and an Inspector General of the Intelligence Community (IC IG), created by statute in 2010.

PCLOB: The Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, an independent, bipartisan, five-member executive-branch agency created on the 9/11 Commission's recommendation to review counterterrorism programs for their impact on civil liberties. It requires three members for a quorum.

Whistleblower / ICWPA: An employee who reports wrongdoing through lawful channels. The Intelligence Community Whistleblower Protection Act of 1998 creates a route for IC employees to bring 'urgent concerns' to the intelligence committees via the IC IG — a channel whose adequacy is directly on your agenda.

Classification and 'sources and methods': The executive system for restricting national-security information. The DNI is legally charged with protecting intelligence sources and methods — the standing justification for secrecy that every oversight proposal must reckon with.

5. Introduction to the Agenda

Agenda

Deliberating upon the oversight of the United States Intelligence Community, with a view to strengthening congressional oversight and accountability

Stated plainly, the agenda asks this committee to examine how the United States Congress supervises the 18 agencies of the U.S. Intelligence Community, to assess whether the existing mechanisms of that supervision (budget authorization, confirmation of senior officials, classified briefings, investigations, and statutory reporting requirements) are adequate, and to draft legislation that strengthens congressional oversight and accountability without destroying the secrecy on which intelligence work depends. It is a domestic, institutional agenda: the subject is not any single spy program, but the machinery through which the elected branch controls the secret one.

The dimensions of the problem need to be clear from the start. The Intelligence Community consists of 18 different organizations, including the CIA, the NSA, the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the national security side of the FBI. It includes more than one hundred thousand employees and its budget amounts to one hundred billion dollars per year, according to government figures. Nearly all of what it does is classified. This situation raises problems for any constitutional democracy, since citizens have no idea about something they cannot see, voters are unable to control what they do not know about, and plaintiffs rarely come forward with claims against programs they cannot show had anything to do with them. Congress is the key outside control on U.S. intelligence because it alone has the power, the clearances, and the democratic accountability to peer into the classified world in the interests of citizens.

At issue for this committee is whether the system continues to work as intended, and if it does not, what can be done to restore it. Congressional oversight operates principally via the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and its House equivalent, relying on the mechanisms outlined above in Section 2: budget authorization, official appointments, classified briefings, investigations, and mandated reports. A half century of experience – from the exposures by the Church Committee in the 1970s, through the 2001-era surveillance programs and Edward Snowden’s disclosures in 2013, to a string of Inspector General and FISA Court discoveries of non-compliant collection operations – have left substantial cause for concern about whether the system remains sufficient. The committees themselves have frequently complained about briefings that have been incomplete, untimely, or misleading. The events of 2025-2026 have made this question all the more pressing: a major surveillance authority expired without renewal due to stalemate over reform efforts, the PCLOB lost its quorum, inspectors general for the agencies were stripped of their posts, and an FBI internal compliance unit was dismantled.

This assignment is legislative in nature, and it is an open-ended one. ‘Improving congressional oversight and accountability’ could entail provisions of warrant for searches of Americans’ electronic communications, or it could involve reviving independent regulatory bodies and immunizing them against being fired. It could be about making sure that laws requiring the executive to provide ‘full and current information’ are enforced, reorganizing the committees, enhancing whistleblower rights, or punishing violations. Or, indeed, a senator might decide, as many sensible people do, that the oversight system is working well enough, that the real danger is disabling the agencies responsible for protecting the country, and that any reforms

should be surgical in nature, not wholesale. There is no room for being unprepared on this issue. Hopefully, this guide will help you develop a stance, which you will be able to defend using the primary sources listed in Section 12.

6. Background of the Issue: How America Built Its Oversight System

6.1 The era of deference (1947–1974)

The current system of intelligence in the US came into being in 1947, with the signing of the National Security Act and the creation of the CIA and the National Security Council. The National Security Agency was formed by executive order in 1952, without any announcement of its existence for many years after. In the first three decades of its life, congressional oversight hardly functioned as oversight at all. Intelligence affairs were discussed by small subcommittees of the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees, who were generally content not to inquire too closely into matters of national security. The spirit of the era is summed up perfectly by Senator Leverett Saltonstall, in his statement from 1956, where he noted that the feeling went both ways – politicians preferred ignorance of some activities rather than responsibility for them. Scholars refer to this time as the ‘undersight’.

The first breach in this system was scandal. In December 1974, journalist Seymour Hersh broke the story on the front page of The New York Times exposing how the CIA had run an extensive domestic intelligence program targeting the American antiwar movement without any authorization by the CIA’s charter, which prohibited the agency’s internal security activities. This story, following on the heels of Watergate, blew up. Almost immediately, Congress enacted the Hughes-Ryan Amendment of 1974, the first statute imposing any meaningful controls on covert action: namely, it mandated the President’s personal approval of covert actions by “finding” and reporting them to Congress.

6.2 The Year of Intelligence: Church, Pike, and Rockefeller (1975–76)

In 1975 — remembered as the ‘Year of Intelligence’ — three separate investigations opened at once: the Senate’s Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, chaired by Senator Frank Church of Idaho; the House’s Pike Committee; and the executive branch’s own Rockefeller Commission. The Church Committee’s fourteen published reports remain the most consequential

body of intelligence oversight ever produced, and delegates should read at least their findings. Among the abuses documented:

- COINTELPRO: an FBI program that, for over fifteen years, surveilled, infiltrated, and actively disrupted lawful domestic political groups — civil rights organizations, anti-war movements, and others — including a campaign of harassment against Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.;
- Operations SHAMROCK and MINARET: NSA programs that copied millions of international telegrams entering and leaving the United States and maintained watchlists of American citizens, all without warrants;
- MKULTRA: CIA experiments with drugs, including LSD, on unwitting human subjects;
- CIA plots to assassinate foreign leaders, including Patrice Lumumba and Fidel Castro, and participation in the destabilization of foreign governments; and
- Decades of mail-opening programs directed at American citizens' correspondence.

The Church Committee drew two major lessons from all the findings which defined how things developed after this. Firstly, that this was not the work of any rogue elephant but many of these actions had been sanctioned, condoned, or willfully overlooked by presidents of both parties, thus proving that the executive branch could not be relied upon to check itself. Secondly, that technology had surpassed legislation. The warning given by Church on national television, that if those capabilities of the NSA were ever turned towards us, Americans would "have no place to hide," has been quoted in all subsequent discussions on surveillance.

The institutional solution was to establish permanent and specific oversight bodies: the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence in 1976 and the corresponding committee in the House of Representatives in 1977. This deal that was made still shapes the system: the intelligence services will maintain their secrecy vis-à-vis the general public, but in return, two elected legislative committees will know everything about the agencies, having the power to fund, defund, regulate, and disclose. Each issue on your agenda is, in essence, a dispute over whether that deal is being honored.

7. Past Legislative and Oversight Efforts

This section traces the statutes and investigations that built — and repeatedly patched — the oversight architecture. Do not memorize them as trivia; each exists because something failed, and each is a precedent you can build on in your own drafting.

7.1 The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (1978)

FISA was the Church Committee's most durable legislative legacy. It required, for the first time, judicial authorization for electronic surveillance conducted inside the United States for foreign-intelligence purposes, and created the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC) to issue those orders in classified proceedings. FISA embodied a compromise that recurs throughout this agenda: secrecy was preserved, but decision-making was moved partly outside the executive branch. Critics have always noted the court's structural weaknesses — it hears only the government's side, approves the overwhelming majority of applications, and its significant rulings were, for a long time, entirely secret.

7.2 The Intelligence Oversight Act (1980) and the 'fully and currently informed' standard

The 1980 Act, now codified at 50 U.S.C. §§ 3091–3092, is the statutory heart of congressional oversight. It obliges the President to ensure the intelligence committees are kept 'fully and currently informed' of all intelligence activities, including significant anticipated activities and significant intelligence failures, and consolidated reporting into the two intelligence committees. It also created the 'Gang of Eight' exception for extraordinarily sensitive covert actions. Delegates should notice what the Act lacks: any enforcement mechanism. When an administration briefs late, narrowly, or not at all, the statute provides no penalty — a gap repeatedly proposed for repair and never yet filled.

7.3 Iran-Contra and the 1991 reforms

It came to light in 1986 that officials of the Reagan administration had covertly sold weapons to Iran and used the money to support the Contras in Nicaragua, in violation of a specific congressional prohibition (Boland Amendment). It was found by the joint congressional investigation in 1987 that the Iran-Contra scandal took place due to the evasion of the oversight process itself. The Congressional reaction

came in the form of the Intelligence Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 1991, which provided a statutory definition of covert action, that it had to be done pursuant to a written, non-retroactive finding by the president and not in violation of U.S. law or the Constitution, and that the notifications should be improved. Another reaction to the scandal was in the form of the CIA Inspector General Act of 1989, which made the CIA Inspector General an independent, Senate-confirmed statutory officer, the very prototype of the independent watchdog of today's time.

7.4 Whistleblower channels: the ICWPA (1998) and after

The Intelligence Community Whistleblower Protection Act of 1998 established a legal way by which IC employees could report an 'urgent concern' to the intelligence committees, namely that the employee files a report with the Inspector General, who evaluates the veracity of the complaint and then channels it via the agency head to Congress. However, the ICWPA is generally considered a reporting avenue and not a whistleblower protection law since the protections available to other federal employees under the Whistleblower Protection Act do not apply to IC employees, who cannot file suit. The Presidential Policy Directive 19 (2012) and various clauses of subsequent Intelligence Authorization Acts provided for protections against retaliation for the withholding of clearance, yet this fundamental inequality persists, and the range of the reporting avenue has been tested by whistleblowers ranging from NSA's Thomas Drake to the analyst whose 2019 complaint led to a presidential impeachment.

7.5 9/11 and the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (2004)

The attacks of September 11, 2001 exposed a different kind of oversight failure: not abuse, but fragmentation and missed warning. The 9/11 Commission's 2004 report famously described congressional oversight of intelligence as 'dysfunctional,' pointing to the jurisdictional patchwork and the committees' limited leverage, and recommended sweeping consolidation that Congress — protective of its committee turf — largely declined to enact. What Congress did pass was the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA), the largest restructuring since 1947: it created the Director of National Intelligence to lead the 18-element community and the National Counterterrorism Center to fuse threat information. On the Commission's recommendation, Congress also created the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, made a fully independent agency by the Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007. In parallel, the USA PATRIOT

Act of 2001 had dramatically expanded collection authorities — including Section 215's business-records power — setting up the next generation of controversies.

7.6 Warrantless surveillance and the FISA Amendments Act (2005–2008)

In December 2005, The New York Times revealed that the NSA had, since 2001, been intercepting communications into and out of the United States without FISA warrants under a secret presidential program — an operation known internally as Stellar Wind, briefed only to the Gang of Eight and concealed even from most FISC judges. After a period of legal turmoil, Congress chose to legalize a version of the program rather than end it: first temporarily in the Protect America Act of 2007, then durably in the FISA Amendments Act of 2008, whose Section 702 authorizes the warrantless collection, from U.S. providers, of communications of non-U.S. persons reasonably believed to be abroad. Section 702 has been the central battlefield of surveillance oversight ever since, and its story continues in Section 7.

7.7 Snowden and the USA FREEDOM Act (2013–2015)

The Snowden revelations, which took place in June of 2013, exposed the fact that the U.S. Government was collecting the phone metadata of practically all Americans through a program conducted by the NSA under a secret FISA Court interpretation of Section 215 of the Patriot Act. There were other leaks as well that revealed the existence of the PRISM program being operated under Section 702. The reason why this was a huge scandal is because of the following reasons. Firstly, the program relied on the secret law that is the statutory interpretation which the public, and many of the members of Congress, had never seen. Secondly, only three months back from that event, Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, swore before the Senate that the NSA did not 'wittingly' collect data on millions of Americans; an answer he described as the 'least untruthful' answer at his disposal. The scandal ultimately produced reform: the USA FREEDOM Act of 2015 ended bulk collection, established a panel of amici curiae to argue independently before the FISA Court, and created a review process for its significant opinions. Delegates should draw the uncomfortable lesson honestly: the most significant surveillance reform in a generation was triggered not by the oversight system, but by its circumvention.

7.8 FISA abuses and the Reforming Intelligence and Securing America Act (2018–2024)

More oversight findings kept building up on both sides of the political spectrum. The Justice Department's Inspector General, Michael Horowitz, had discovered at least seventeen major mistakes and oversights in the applications for surveillance under FISA against a presidential campaign adviser, Carter Page, in a report released in December 2019, which led to a rare public criticism from FISC and convinced many conservatives that FISA abuse was not just a theoretical threat. On the other hand, repeated rulings from FISC and government compliance reports revealed hundreds of thousands of FBI queries of Section 702 information regarding Americans, including those related to protesters, political donors, members of Congress, and a state judge.

In light of these events, the Section 702 expiration date of April 2024 generated the most contentious reauthorization effort in the program's history. The Reforming Intelligence and Securing America Act (RISAA), signed on 20 April 2024, renewed Section 702 for two years and made some meaningful but highly contentious reforms in the form of new authorizations and civil liberties safeguards for U.S. person queries, criminal sanctions for misuse, increased number of FISC amicus, and increased congressional oversight of FISC proceedings. However, an amendment requiring a warrant before querying Americans' communications failed by a tie vote of 212 to 212 in the House of Representatives, while the same act also expanded the scope of "electronic communication service providers" in ways that its critics said would capture many more American businesses than previously thought. The two-year clock RISAA set, which ran to 20 April 2026, is the one that has now expired.

8. The Current Situation (2024–2026)

This is the most important section of the guide. The events below are recent, well documented, and contested; they supply the raw material for whatever your committee decides to do. Dates matter here — cite them.

8.1 The lapse of Section 702

For the first time since its enactment in 2008, Section 702 of FISA has expired. This process is worth understanding in precise detail. Extension for RISAA lasted for two years and would end on 20 April 2026. In light of disagreement over reforms in the legislative chamber, a ten-day patch was approved by Congress on 17 April 2026. The

House passed a three-year extension on 29 April 2026, in a 235-191 vote, but included a completely unrelated provision banning a digital central bank currency that the Senate leadership found unacceptable; the Senate voted against the measure. Both chambers passed a clean 45-day extension (unanimously in the Senate and 261-111 in the House) until 12 June 2026 on 30 April 2026. Negotiations were unsuccessful once again, the House refused an additional extension, and Section 702 expired on 12 June 2026. It remains expired at the time of writing, with negotiations continuing.

Two important considerations add to the complexity of the story. First, this provision failure does not terminate the collection effort, as the FISA Court approved the program's annual certifications in March 2026, and the law provides that those certifications, and the directives issued under them, remain in force until they expire in March 2027, even though the underlying statute has lapsed. In other words, the intelligence community continues implementing the program, while Congress fights over the future of the program. Second, this is not a straightforward partisan struggle. The current administration sought a 'clean' reauthorization of the program without adding any new conditions; opponents consist of an unusual alliance of progressive Democrats and libertarian Republicans who are demanding reforms such as requiring a warrant for U.S.-person queries, closing the 'data broker loophole,' where agencies can obtain the private information of Americans through commercial purchase rather than through legal process, a fix for the broadened provider definition in RISAA, and reinstituting independent oversight bodies.

8.2 The compliance record: evidence for both sides

Both sides of this issue have recent, relevant statistics to cite – and that's precisely why this issue is difficult. On the reform side: an opinion by the FISA Court in early 2026, partially declassified in April, has exposed ongoing FBI compliance issues, among which are deficiencies in the mechanisms designed to screen out inappropriate queries. Based on the numbers provided by the FBI itself to the Senate Judiciary Committee in March 2026, FBI queries involving U.S.-person identifiers increased by about 35% from December 2024 to November 2025; Sen. Ron Wyden claims that 'sensitive' queries, meaning those involving journalists, religious institutions, and political entities, multiplied by a factor of greater than threefold in 2025, for reasons left unspecified. Wyden has warned about a classified legal interpretation of Section 702 that, in his view, implicates American citizens' privacy rights and has remained secret from public scrutiny and even from much of

Congress — a replay of the ‘secret law’ controversy preceding the Snowden revelations.

From the other perspective, however, an Inspector General of the Justice Department report released in October 2025 showed that the query compliance of the FBI greatly increased following the RISAA changes – from around 82 percent prior to the change to 96 percent afterward – while the last published report by the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board found that Section 702 ‘remains highly valuable’ to national security. Advocates tout the importance of the program in stopping terrorist attacks, providing for the cyber-defenses against threats like the Chinese government-backed Salt Typhoon attack on U.S. telecommunications infrastructure, and aiding in fentanyl suppression.

8.3 The watchdogs in question

The second cluster of developments concerns the oversight infrastructure itself — the layer of independent bodies on which Congress depends for eyes inside the executive branch.

The PCLOB. On 27 January 2025, the President dismissed the three Democrats on the Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, leaving the Board with only one member and thus, because of the requirement that three members constitute a quorum, without the ability to commence investigations and issue Board reports. The Board had, during its time of having a quorum, launched a project to see whether the FBI had corrected the Section 702 violations, the report which would have formed the basis for discussion in the reauthorization debate process; now, it cannot be produced as a Board report. In May 2025, a federal district court found that these dismissals were not lawful, reasoning that an ‘at-will’ dismissal would result in making the Board “beholden to the very authority it is supposed to oversee”; the government has appealed this decision, basing its arguments on the President’s constitutional power of removal, and the appeal is awaiting determination pending another Supreme Court case.

Inspector Generals. At the end of January 2025, the administration fired the inspector generals for over a dozen federal agencies without first giving Congress the requisite 30 days’ notice as called for in the Inspector General Act, which was amended in 2022. Within the world of oversight, specifically, the veteran inspector general at the Justice Department left office midway through 2025, with speculation on all sides about whether his successors will maintain the IG’s independence.

Internal Compliance. In May 2025, the FBI Director dissolved the Office of Internal Auditing, an internal auditing office formed in 2020 in response to the Carter Page case for auditing compliance with surveillance under the national security laws, such as Section 702. The proponents of the decision argue that it is a step towards consolidation; opponents claim that most of the compliance data was collected through the office's audits.

Regardless of where any one senator stands on every single issue, the broader reality is one that your committee needs to address: the existing system of intelligence oversight is one in which a great deal of responsibility falls to self-policing by the executive branch through IGs, compliance functions, and an executive-branch board; and in every case, each of these elements has been removable, disbanded, or rendered ineffective by the branch they are supposed to oversee.

8.4 Information access and the candor problem

The time-honored complaint about insufficient information, delivered too late, has new instances. In the letter to the DNI and the acting Attorney General dated 30 April 2026, the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the SSCI pointed out the statutory requirement to conduct a declassification review of relevant FISC opinions and asked for the disclosure of the spring 2026 FISC opinion within fifteen days in order that it might be used in the Section 702 debate in the Senate. The administration did not release the opinion in time. Members of the delegation can add this example to the list of the established practice: notifying only the "Gang of Eight" of a controversial program's existence, with members barred from taking notes or consulting their staff or attorneys; Clapper testimony from 2013; and GAO's continuous problems in auditing intelligence activities because of lack of access. The problem with the structure remains the same – there is no way to enforce the requirement for being "fully and currently informed," enshrined in the Intelligence Oversight Act.

8.5 Confirmations, leadership churn, and structural design

It bears mentioning that the Senate's powers of advice and consent are in play here, too. The Director of National Intelligence appointed in February 2025 tendered her resignation on 22 May 2026, and the appointment of an acting Director who is not a member of the intelligence community to fill the position was roundly criticized by some Senate Republicans, among others, for the lack of qualifications and the skipping over of the confirmation process for a position so important in the middle of a debate about surveillance. In addition, the Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal

Year 2027, currently under consideration, would, as currently drafted, eliminate the need for Senate confirmation of the general counsels of the CIA and ODNI; a group of civil-liberties organizations have complained that the lawyers of the agencies secretly make policy on surveillance, detention, and interrogation and that the elimination of the requirement for confirmation reduces one of the few opportunities for public accountability of those agencies.

It is not all recent news that revolves around conflict. For instance, the Intelligence Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2026 was approved by the SSCI with an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 15-2 in July 2025, which included whistleblower protections, provisions for congressional oversight, ODNI reform, and infrastructure provisions due to Salt Typhoon.

8.6 New frontiers the old rules never contemplated

Finally, there are many trends that challenge a surveillance oversight regime designed with wiretaps and file cabinets in mind. Intelligence and law enforcement agencies now buy commercial information about Americans' lives — location data, application data, and much more — from data brokers, bypassing due process in acquiring what would otherwise have to be obtained with a warrant; the House voted on the Fourth Amendment Is Not For Sale Act in April 2024, but the Senate has failed to act, and plugging this gap is among the key asks in the present negotiations. Artificial intelligence is revolutionizing both the collection and the analysis of information, opening the door to dossier-building through individually authorized queries that will never pass any oversight checkpoint at all. And the very classification system, which generates tens of millions of classification decisions annually, defines what can be overseen in the first place.

8.7 Framing the debate

Cutting across partisan divisions, participants in the debate can recognize at least three clear groups, although actual members of Congress have elements of each one. The first group is sometimes referred to as the security-first group. This group considers that Section 702 and related programs are some of the most useful tools for American intelligence because they have been responsible for disrupting terrorist attacks, cyber defense, and providing much of the information used by the President on a daily basis. From this group's perspective, the current structure of oversight, which includes two committees, a court, inspector generals, and compliance reviews,

is the most sophisticated in the world of democracies, and adding more burdens like a warrant requirement would not help protect privacy.

The second is the civil-liberties camp. Its answer is that fifty years of documented abuse, from COINTELPRO to hundreds of thousands of improper queries, shows that safeguards on paper fail without enforcement. Its premise is that American communications are entitled to judicial oversight irrespective of how they were gathered and that a program whose watchdogs can be dismissed by the very officials they watch is not being meaningfully overseen at all. The third category, usually ignored and definitely worth gaming, is institutionalist. It is more concerned with the functioning of the Senate rather than with surveillance policy per se and sees in the erosion of the power of the purse, the power of confirmation, and the power of information under both Republican and Democratic presidents the key problem. The solutions proposed are enforcement provisions, notification provisions carrying serious teeth, protected funding for the overseers, and the ability of the committees themselves. Where any given senator ends up ought to be a function of his or her state, his or her record, and his or her party; but the coalitions formed here span the aisle.

9. Case Study 1: The SSCI Torture Report — Oversight at Full Strength, and Its Limits

The best example to illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of intelligence oversight by the Senate is the investigation conducted by the Committee of CIA's post-9/11 Detention and Interrogation Program. Since 2009, SSCI staffers have examined over six million pages of documents of the CIA, resulting in a 6,700-page classified study and its 525-page executive summary, which was declassified and made public in December 2014. The results of their work were quite shocking – the program's "enhanced interrogation techniques" were even more cruel than the CIA was presenting them, the agency gave misleading information to the White House, the Justice Department and Congress, and the program's efficiency was overestimated.

The probe also yielded what may have been one of the most serious constitutional showdowns in the committee's history. In 2014, the CIA obtained access to the computer systems used by SSCI investigators working on the report, an action that the committee's chairman, Senator Dianne Feinstein, called on the Senate floor a "constitutional violation" of separation of powers, and was later confirmed to have

happened by the CIA's Inspector General, contrary to the denials by the Director. The Director apologized; no disciplinary action was recommended.

The lessons cut in several directions, and delegates should use all of them. The report showed how determined committee can uncover the secrets of even the most tightly protected program, the power of full oversight. The computer search scandal showed that the agency under oversight was able to spy on those who are overseeing it, without any real consequences – enforcement gap in microcosm. And then there is the aftermath – an issue on your agenda: full 6,700 page report is still classified, and courts decided that it is the congressional record and thus not available by public records laws. Whether the most comprehensive work done by Senate in the history of its oversight activity should remain inaccessible to public is the question worth raising in committee.

10. Case Study 2: Snowden, Section 702, and the Problem of 'Available' Knowledge

The Snowden disclosures of 2013 are usually debated as a question about one man — traitor or whistleblower. For this committee, that is the least interesting question. The productive question is institutional: why did the oversight system not surface, and could not correct, what the leak revealed?

Think about what the system actually knew. The bulk telephony metadata collection program ran under Section 215, with repeated authorization from the FISA Court, with official briefings available to members of Congress. But the interpretation of the relevant law was classified; the members later explained they didn't attend or understand those briefings, which were not supposed to be shared even with staff or publicly; and the only two people who understood and complained — Senators Ron Wyden and Mark Udall — could only issue enigmatic public warnings that a secret interpretation of the law existed, because revealing it would have been against the law. When the Director of National Intelligence was asked, in sworn testimony before the Senate, on camera, if the NSA collected data on millions of Americans, he said no. Oversight, in other words, in the strict sense, was working; accountability — meaning the ability of elected officials to contest and alter the policy — was not.

The reforms of the USA FREEDOM Act (2015) and RISAA (2024) each addressed pieces of this: FISC amici to argue against the government, mandatory declassification review of significant opinions, expanded congressional access. Yet in

2026 the same pattern recurs in updated form — a spring 2026 FISC opinion documenting violations that the administration has declined to declassify despite the SSCI's formal demand, and a senator again warning of a secret interpretation of Section 702. Delegates drafting legislation should treat this case study as a checklist: information can be technically 'available' to Congress and still functionally unusable. Reforms that do not distinguish between the two tend to repeat history.

11. Conclusion

A half-century ago, the Church Committee studied what clandestine power had wrought in a democracy and struck a deal: the agencies could maintain their secrets as long as elected officials representing the public had access to what was going on behind closed doors and could do something about it. Each aspect of this deal is being renegotiated. Surveillance legislation has expired while the gathering goes on under grandfathered judicial authorization. A board intended to oversee the overseers has one remaining member, and litigation over the dismissal of the others is still pending. The obligation that the intelligence community must ensure Congress is "fully and currently informed" has been met, in the committees' own words, with briefings that were incomplete, untimely, or misleading — and the statute still lacks an enforcement clause. Meanwhile, the threat that necessitates the existence of an Intelligence Community is not imaginary. A rival China, a belligerent Russia, and cyber attacks on our telephone system used even by senators are all too real—and so is the intelligence that can protect us against them.

This is not about balancing security and freedom in the abstract. This is about writing the mechanisms, which means the funding criteria, the search criteria, the notice criteria, the protections for removal, and the penalties, under which the two coexist. The best committees will battle over these mechanisms but will come out with something that has a plausible shot of getting sixty votes. As you go into it, remember the warning of Senator Church fifty years ago. He worried about a time when the machinery of surveillance, once directed inward, would make Americans 'have no place to hide.' Whether that day is prevented by law or arrives by default depends on this committee alone.

12. Guiding Questions

These questions are provided by the dais to help you narrow your senator's stance and prepare your position papers. They are deliberately specific; vague answers to them will read as unprepared. This is not an exhaustive list of what committee must address.

1. Should FBI, NSA, or CIA queries of Section 702 databases using U.S.-person identifiers require a probable-cause warrant, a lesser court order, internal attorney approval, or no new requirement? What exceptions (consent, emergencies, cyber-signatures, victims of crime) would your senator accept, and what does the operational data say about how often each exception would apply?
2. The Intelligence Oversight Act requires that the committees be kept 'fully and currently informed' but attaches no consequence to violation. What enforcement mechanism — automatic funding fences, mandatory IG referral, expedited subpoena procedures, personnel consequences — would actually work, and what are its constitutional limits?
3. Should Congress restrict the President's power to remove PCLOB members and inspectors general for the duration of their terms? How does pending Supreme Court precedent on removal power constrain your drafting options, and can funding or reporting structures achieve insulation that removal protections cannot?
4. Should the government be prohibited from purchasing commercially available data about U.S. persons that would otherwise require legal process to obtain? How would your bill define such data without crippling routine open-source work?
5. Is the Gang of Eight mechanism — notification without notes, staff, or counsel — meaningful oversight of covert action, and if not, what should replace or supplement it?
6. Should IC whistleblower protections be aligned with the standards other federal employees enjoy, including access to independent adjudication? How do you answer the argument that classified equities make such alignment dangerous?
7. Does the jurisdictional patchwork among the intelligence, judiciary, armed services, and appropriations committees strengthen oversight through

redundancy or weaken it through diffusion? Would your senator support the 9/11 Commission's consolidation recommendations today?

8. What, concretely, should happen to Section 702 now that it has lapsed: clean reauthorization, reauthorization with reforms, further short-term extensions, or permanent expiration? What does the March 2027 expiry of the current FISC certifications mean for your timeline?
9. Should significant FISC opinions be subject to mandatory declassification on a statutory clock, with the burden on the government to justify continued secrecy — and who arbitrates disputes?
10. Should the general counsels of the CIA and ODNI remain Senate-confirmed positions? More broadly, which IC posts warrant confirmation, and does the acting-official mechanism require statutory limits?
11. How should oversight adapt to artificial intelligence in intelligence work — should aggregated querying, AI-assisted targeting, or model use in analysis carry their own audit and reporting requirements?
12. What is your senator's answer to the classic objection that every proposal in this committee must survive: how does this reform strengthen accountability without exposing sources and methods or slowing action against genuine threats?

13. Reference Links and Bibliography

Begin with the primary documents; they carry the most weight in committee. This Background Guide itself may not be cited as evidence. All sources below were verified as of July 2026.

A. Primary documents: statutes and foundational texts

- U.S. Constitution, Article I; Article II, Section 2 (advice and consent). National Archives: <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution>
- National Security Act of 1947, as amended — congressional oversight and covert action provisions codified at 50 U.S.C. §§ 3091–3093: <https://uscode.house.gov> (Title 50, Ch. 44)
- S.Res. 400, 94th Congress (1976) — establishing the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence: <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/about>

- Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act of 1978, Pub. L. 95-511, and Section 702 (50 U.S.C. § 1881a): <https://uscode.house.gov>
- Intelligence Oversight Act of 1980, codified at 50 U.S.C. §§ 3091–3092.
- Intelligence Community Whistleblower Protection Act of 1998, Pub. L. 105-272, Title VII.
- Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, Pub. L. 108-458.
- Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, Pub. L. 110-53 (PCLOB charter, 42 U.S.C. § 2000ee).
- USA FREEDOM Act of 2015, Pub. L. 114-23.
- Reforming Intelligence and Securing America Act (RISAA) of 2024, Pub. L. 118-49 (H.R. 7888): <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/7888>

B. Primary documents: reports and investigations

- Church Committee, Final Reports of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities (1976), esp. Book II, ‘Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans’: <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>
- The 9/11 Commission Report (2004), esp. Ch. 13 on congressional oversight: <https://www.9-11commission.gov/report/>
- SSCI, Committee Study of the CIA’s Detention and Interrogation Program — Executive Summary (declassified Dec. 2014): <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/publications>
- DOJ Office of the Inspector General, Review of Four FISA Applications and Other Aspects of the FBI’s Crossfire Hurricane Investigation (Dec. 2019): <https://oig.justice.gov>
- Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board, reports on Section 215 (2014) and Section 702 (2014; 2023): <https://www.pclob.gov/Reports>
- Congressional Research Service, ‘FISA Section 702 and the 2024 Reforming Intelligence and Securing America Act’ (R48592, 2026): <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48592>

- Congressional Research Service, ‘Congressional Oversight of Intelligence: Background and Selected Options for Further Reform’ (R45421): <https://crsreports.congress.gov>
- ODNI, U.S. Intelligence Community Budget disclosures (aggregate NIP/MIP figures): <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/what-we-do/ic-budget>
- ODNI, Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Community (2026) and SSCI/HPSCI worldwide-threats testimony: <https://www.dni.gov>

C. Official committee and agency resources

- Senate Select Committee on Intelligence — hearings, publications, and rules: <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov>
- Congress.gov committee page (SSCI) — hearings and legislation, incl. the FY2026 and FY2027 Intelligence Authorization Acts: <https://www.congress.gov/committee/senate-intelligence-select/slin00>
- Offices of Sens. Cotton and Warner, press release on SSCI passage of the Intelligence Authorization Act for FY2026 (15–2 vote; whistleblower and Salt Typhoon provisions), July 2025: <https://www.cotton.senate.gov> and <https://www.warner.senate.gov>
- Office of the Intelligence Community Inspector General: <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/who-we-are/organizations/icig>
- Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court — public filings and declassified opinions: <https://www.fisc.uscourts.gov>
- United States Senate — ‘Powers and Procedures’ and committee system overviews: <https://www.senate.gov/about/powers-procedures.htm>

D. Analysis and reporting on the 2025–2026 developments

- Brennan Center for Justice, ‘Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, Explained’ (Apr. 2026) and the Section 702: 2026 Resource Page: <https://www.brennancenter.org>
- Congressional Research Service and news reporting on the 2026 extension votes: CNBC, ‘FISA Section 702: Congress passes short-term surveillance program extension’ (Apr. 30, 2026): <https://www.cnbc.com/2026/04/30/fisa-section-702-congress-extension.html>; Nextgov/FCW, ‘House passes 3-year FISA 702 extension’ (Apr. 29, 2026): <https://www.nextgov.com>

- Electronic Privacy Information Center (EPIC), ‘FISA Section 702: Reform or Sunset’ campaign page and June 2026 lapse coverage: <https://epic.org>
- Electronic Frontier Foundation, Section 702 reauthorization coverage (2024–2026): <https://www.eff.org/issues/foreign-intelligence-surveillance-act>
- Lawfare, ‘Trump’s Sacking of PCLOB Members Threatens Data Privacy’ (Jan. 2025): <https://www.lawfaremedia.org>
- Brookings Institution, ‘Why dismantling the PCLOB and CSRB threatens privacy and national security’ (Feb. 2025): <https://www.brookings.edu>
- The Record, ‘Firings of intelligence oversight board members were illegal, judge rules’ (May 2025): <https://therecord.media>; Nextgov/FCW coverage of the PCLOB litigation (May 2025): <https://www.nextgov.com>
- Just Security / Tech Policy Press, interviews with removed PCLOB members on the loss of quorum (2025): <https://www.justsecurity.org>; <https://www.techpolicy.press>
- Cato Institute, analyses of the 2026 FISA debate, FBI query statistics, and the oversight infrastructure (Mar.–Apr. 2026): <https://www.cato.org/blog>
- Nextgov/FCW, ‘Keep Senate confirmation for top intelligence lawyers, civil liberties groups urge’ (Oct. 2025): <https://www.nextgov.com>
- Wiley Rein LLP, client alert on the April 2026 Section 702 expiration and grandfathered FISC directives (Apr. 2026): <https://www.wileyconnect.com>
- George Washington University Law School, research guide, ‘U.S. Intelligence Law: Organizations & Oversight’: <https://law.gwu.libguides.com/intelligence>

E. Optional reading (genuinely worth your time)

- ‘No Place to Hide’ in the original: Senator Frank Church’s August 1975 Meet the Press warning about the NSA — read alongside Church Committee Book II, pp. 1–20. Twenty minutes that frame the entire agenda.
- The day the Senate accused the CIA of spying on it: Sen. Dianne Feinstein’s floor speech of 11 March 2014 (Congressional Record, S1487–S1492) — the sharpest separation-of-powers statement in modern oversight.
- How a reauthorization dies: the 212–212 House tally on the warrant amendment to RISAA (Roll Call 119, Apr. 12, 2024, at clerk.house.gov) — study

who voted how, and you will understand your committee's coalitions before it opens.

Note: This background guide is not an exhaustive research document. It is an effort by the Executive Board to help you identify the aspects of the agenda that merit detailed study. The questions above are a floor, not a ceiling — and the senator who goes beyond them will own the floor of this one.